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DESIRABLE COMPETENCIES WHEN HIRING OUTDOOR PURSUITS TRIP LEADERS ON UNIVERSITY AND COLLEGE CAMPUSES

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DESIRABLE COMPETENCIES WHEN HIRING OUTDOOR PURSUITS TRIP LEADERS ON UNIVERSITY AND COLLEGE CAMPUSES

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ABSTRACT

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Many universities offer outdoor pursuits trips (e.g., backpacking, canoeing) for their students. These trips include incoming student orientation programs, physical education and recreation classes, and extracurricular activities. The leaders who are leading these trips play a key role in making the trip a success (Shooter, Paisley, & Sibthorp, 2009a). Having the right staff to facilitate these trips is very important. There are many components that go into hiring competent people and training quality outdoor leaders (Teschner & Wolter, 1990). The overriding problem is a lack of knowledge of general standards regarding outdoor leaders in university programs. While there are agencies that accredit outdoor programs (e.g., Wilderness Education Association (WEA), Association for Experiential Education (AEE)), many university programs do not seek accreditation, but instead set their own criteria for leaders. This study examines how university programs, both academic and extracurricular, set standards for trip leaders. It identifies 1) minimum qualifications of leaders, 2) components of their leader training, and 3) competencies desired in the hiring process.

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INTRODUCTION

Many universities offer outdoor pursuits trips (e.g., backpacking, canoeing) for their students. These trips include incoming student orientation programs, physical education and recreation classes, and extracurricular activities. The leaders who are leading these trips play a key role in making the trip a success (Shooter, Paisley, & Sibthorp, 2009a). Having the right staff to facilitate these trips is very important. There are many components that go into hiring competent people and training quality outdoor leaders (Teschner & Wolter, 1990).

An overriding problem in hiring competent outdoor leaders is a lack of knowledge of general standards regarding outdoor leaders in university programs. While there are agencies that accredit outdoor programs (e.g., Wilderness Education Association (WEA), Association for Experiential Education (AEE)), many university programs do not seek accreditation, but instead set their own criteria for leaders. This study will examine what university programs, both academic and extracurricular, look for in an outdoor trip leader. It identifies 1) competencies desired in the hiring process, 2) components of leader training, and 3) minimum qualifications of leaders.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Universities have long been a setting that provides and promotes leader-facilitated outdoor pursuits. According to Attarian:

> Some of the earliest adventure programs were established at colleges and universities in the Northeastern United States. For example, Dartmouth College, Williams College and Pennsylvania State University were conducting programs before 1925. Prior to 1970, 22 programs were operating in North America. The most significant growth in college and university adventure programs occurred during the "environmental movement" (1970-1975) when 45 programs were established. An additional 128 programs were created from 1976-1999 (Attarian, 2001, p. 142).

As a director of a trip program at a university, it is important to hire qualified staff to lead the trips that go out. Assessing certain qualifications during the hiring process, and continually developing skills through training, will give the director more confidence in the safety and quality of his or her outdoor program. There are different skills that a trip leader needs to have: hard skills and soft skills, both of which come through experience in the field (Knapp, 1990). Each of these is important for a trip leader to be successful.

There are many articles and studies that identify the skills of a highly effective outdoor trip leader. There have been a few different ways of categorizing the skills, including calling them 'soft skills', 'hard skills' and 'conceptual skills', providing a list of core leadership competencies (Martin, Cashel, Wagstaff, & Bruenig, 2006), National Outdoor Leadership School's (NOLS) 4-category curriculum (leadership, environmental

studies, risk management and wilderness skills) and WEA's 18-point curriculum (Shooter, Sibthorp, & Paisley, 2009b).

Furthermore, various studies have focused on what skills are needed, although doing so without necessarily categorizing them. Hobbs and Ewert (2008), for example, used the Delphi method to question 22 individuals from various outdoor venues including universities, independent outdoor programs, NOLS and WEA. The researchers found that the top six priorities in staffing were high moral character, group development skills, vision, exceptional judgment, excellent communication skills and moral courage. They also found that authenticity, "congruence between thought, stated values and action" in leadership was quite important (Hobbs & Ewert, 2008, p. 31).

From the participants' perspective, Taniguchi, Widmer, and Duerden (2007) asked at-risk youth what attributes they liked in their college-age camp counselors. The qualities that they gave were ones that were lacking in their everyday lives. These included ambition, service-orientation, hard work, possessor of identifiable goals, interest in others, unselfishness with their time, lover of fun and a sense of perceived freedom to accomplish whatever they wanted to do.

Certifications

Certifications indicate that a leader has the knowledge covered in a course and has been tested to receive the certification. A leader either has the certifications or does not. These may also be qualifications covered in staff training. Sheridan (2004) suggested that a trip leader should have a wilderness first aid certification, life guarding certification and CPR certification, as well as certifications in the mode of travel that they will perform, such as canoe and kayak instruction, rock climbing and mountaineering

instruction or swift water and high angle rescue. While organizations may prefer these certifications, they may not find them among their applicants. Certainly at universities and colleges, where leaders may be doing only occasional trips, the applicants may be enthusiastic about the outdoors, but not have all of the ideal training. People may have a lot of experience in the field and have good judgment, but have not obtained the certifications, in part because certifications are expensive and time-consuming.

Certifications are controversial. People in favor of certifications see them as positive because they train the leader in safe, ethical practices, and this will trickle down to participants who have not been certified. Those opposed to certifications claim that you cannot certify a person to be safe, as there are many dramatically different environments to encounter with the same certification. Also, certifications may have a hard time evaluating leaders because the assessor sets up the test questions and the test involves no objective risk (Cockrell, 1990). No process of certification has been adopted by the outdoor education industry as a whole (Priest & Gass, 2005).

Hard Skills

A leader needs be able to do the activity, as well as oversee injury management and rescue, navigation and weather reading. Any technical skill that is related directly to the activity would fall into the category of hard skills. This includes the organizational skills that are needed to plan and prepare for the planned trips. Last but not least, environmental skills are hard skills. These skills include knowing and practicing minimum impact camping ethics. In Sheridan's study (2003), environmental skills were ranked last in importance by camp directors.

Soft Skills

When leading in the wilderness, working with others is very important. There are many interpersonal, group dynamics situations that can and do go wrong in the backcountry, and a leader needs to know how to maneuver those situations with tact (Harvey, 1999). Soft skills are the interpersonal skills involved in leading a group. Some of these skills include social skills, psychological skills and communication skills (Phipps & Swiderski, 1990).

Trust is an integral part of relationships that occur in life. When people trust a leader, they are more likely to learn, cooperate, and their group performance is affected positively. Outdoor leaders should look at what affects the levels of trust between themselves and the participants on their trips, as well as encourage healthy relationships that foster that trust. Trust can be fostered by having the technical skills, as well as having interpersonal skills (Shooter et al., 2009a). Another study by Shooter, Paisley, and Sibthorp (2012) affirm this, with the top predictors of trust being technical ability, benevolence, interpersonal skills and integrity.

Judgment and decision-making are skills that are considered conceptual skills by some (Phipps & Swiderski, 1990) and soft skills by others (Twehous, Groves, & Lengfelder, 1991). In this study they are considered soft skills. They are both skills that are learned through experience, as one learns to estimate variables based on what happened in past experiences. According to Cain and McAvoy (1990), judgment is the most important competency in an outdoor leader.

In Mitten's study (2007), she looked at *how* outdoor leaders think and found that they use post-conventional thinking much of the time. Post-conventional thinking is

when people don't just follow the rules of society, but instead follow the underlying moral principles upon which the rules are based. In Mitten's own words, "when these underlying principles [the general moral principles that underlie society's rules] come into conflict with society's rules, these outdoor leaders will not go by convention; they will think in a post-conventional manner and make decisions based on the moral thinking that underlies the convention" (Mitten, 2007, p. 375). An example of post-conventional thinking involves a lifeguard in Miami, Florida. The lifeguard knowingly left his designated area to save a man in distress. He was fired because there were liability issues with no one at his post. "Someone was in danger, I wasn't going to choose my job over someone in danger. My job is to help people in distress," Tomas Lopez, the lifeguard, explained (Alvarez, 2012). In Mitten's study, 81% of the outdoor leaders used post-conventional arguments more than the average adult. This suggests that outdoor leaders, on average, are able to keep an open mind and look for creative solutions while problem solving in the field (Mitten, 2007).

Experience and Training

Experience is a good indicator of all of the above skills. Decision-making and judgment can be based on past experiences and give the leader a better idea of what to do, than if faced with a problem for the first time. Galloway (2007) researched the effect of experience on medical decision-making among outdoor leaders. Her methodology was based on the social judgment theory where:

> (a) human judgments are in part socially determined and in part determined by the individual; (b) within many domains judgments are socially structured; and (c) individuals tend toward consistency in their own judgments, departing in a relatively regular way from the socially defined consensus on how such judgments should be made (Galloway, 2007, p. 105).

Galloway found that inexperienced instructors were more likely to be swayed by the opinion of the group, and more experienced instructors had more decision-making skills available to them when making medical decisions in the field.

When leaders have experience, they deal better with the uncertainties of wilderness travel in the field. Ward (2012) surveyed an academic university class following the WEA curriculum, and 70% of the respondents said that the uncertainties were meaningful for their leadership development. The uncertainties of individual situations were teachable moments that the participants learned from.

METHODOLOGY

This study was a survey of outdoor recreation professionals at universities and colleges who were 2012 members of the Association of Outdoor Recreation and Education (AORE). Two hundred thirteen surveys were electronically sent to representatives at all schools with AORE members. The emailing resulted in 81 useable replies. The survey instrument was developed by the principal investigator and her thesis committee members, using elements of previous studies by Maningas, (2000), Buell, (1980) and Sheridan, (2003). The survey was a combination of multiple choice, open-ended questions and questions with a Likert-type scale.

Skills were separated into two main categories of hard skills and soft skills, following the example of Wagner & Roland (1992) and Knapp (1999). Hard skills are generally related to the technical skills of the activity, and a person's capacity to perform these skills is more easily taught and measured (Sheridan, 2004). Soft skills are related to the tact and interpersonal interactions when leading a group (i.e., the group dynamics). These skills can be more difficult than 'hard' skills, and are harder to teach and measure (Sheridan, 2004). As can be seen in the Hobbs and Ewert (2008) and the Taniguchi et al. (2007) studies, soft skills are ranked highly by both participants and managers alike.

AORE is the primary professional organization of university outdoor pursuit programs. At each of these schools, the person in the campus recreation program who most closely works with outdoor pursuits was sent the questionnaire. The sample

included schools from all over the United States, and included one school in New Zealand. Qualtrics was used to electronically submit and receives the surveys.

A three-step process was used to address the quality of the instrument. First, the researcher carried out an in-depth review of literature. From this review, a draft survey was created. Second, the thesis committee, including a statistician, reviewed the draft survey. Suggestions were made by the faculty to improve the instrument. Finally a draft survey was then piloted.

The final survey was sent to the key informants between March 25-27, 2012. A reminder email was sent on April 10, 2012. SPSS was used to analyze the data statistically in May and June 2012.

RESULTS/ANALYSIS

There were 81 respondents to the Qualtrics survey.

Demographics

The 81 respondents came from all geographic regions across the United States. The regions were defined based on US Census region classification. The region with the highest percentage of respondents was East North Central (IL, IN, MI, OH, WI), with 22.7%. The regions with the lowest amount of respondents were West North Central (IA, KS, MN, MO, NE, ND, SD) and New England. Statistics to calculate differences between the geographic regions were also done. There was no statistical significance in the data when comparing the geographic regions of the United States (a p-value > .001 used).

Most of the respondents were in student recreation services (65%). 9% and 8% were from academic departments and student services/housing departments, respectively. Three percent (3%) were a student organization or club and 15% were other departments on campus. Three of the respondents were housed in two different departments.

Many of the programs surveyed were relatively young outdoor programs. Twenty percent (20%) of the programs were 1-5 years old, 18.7% are 6-10 years old and 13.3% are 11-15 years old. There was a drop in the number of schools after 15 years, though 16% of the schools had been around for 36 or more years.

The respondents had been employed with their current programs for various amounts of time. Almost a third (32.1%) of the informants were with their program for 3-5 years at the time of the survey. Twenty-five point six percent (25.6%) were with their programs for 6-10 years, while 15.4% were for 1-2 years and 14.1 were for less than a year. The remaining 12.9% had been with their programs for 11 or more years.

Almost all of the schools surveyed had twenty or fewer trip leaders in their program, with over half of them using ten or fewer trip leaders. Thirteen point seven percent (13.7%) of the schools had one to two trip leaders, 16.4% had three to five trip leaders and 28.8% had six to ten leaders, 15.1% had 11-15 trip leaders and 13% of schools had 16-20 trip leaders. Five of the schools (6.8%) had 36 or more trip leaders.

Each key informant was asked what their minimum age requirements were for their trip leaders. Sixty nine percent (69%) of the respondents said that 18 was the minimum age, while 4.2% said 21 was their minimum. Eight point five percent (8.5%) had another age as a minimum, and 18.3% had no minimum.

Over half of the schools required 40 or fewer hours of trip-specific training for their outdoor pursuits trip leaders. This amount of time doesn't include certifications, which have their own required amount of time. Twenty-eight point six percent (28.6%) of the leaders were required to complete between 0 and 20 hours of training, 27.1% complete 21-40 hours of training and 21.4% complete 41-60 hours of training. The remaining 22.7% require 60 or more hours of training of their trip leaders.

Of the programs surveyed, over half of them (57.4%) had between 100 and 500 participants each year. There were three schools (4%) that had over 2500 participants in their programs, but most schools tended to have 500 or fewer. Over half of the schools

had 15 or fewer overnight trips per year, with the largest amount of schools leading between six and ten trips (29.7%). Eighteen point nine percent (18.9%) led between one and five overnight trips and 10.8% led between 11 and 15 overnight trips. Six (8.1%) of the schools provided more than 36 overnight trips per year.

Schools led more day trips than overnight trips per year. Twenty percent (20%) of the schools led 11-15 days trips, while 17.3% led between six and ten day trips and 10.7% led between 1-5 day trips. Eleven of the schools led 36 or more day trips in a year.

There are many different activities led by the 77 schools that answered this part of the survey. The top activities were hiking (93.5%), backpacking (90.9%), and rock climbing (89.6%). Activities that were in the 'other' category are avalanche education, bobsled/skeleton, caving, Dutch oven cooking, extreme sledding, hang gliding, horse packing, landscape painting, night sky observation, orienteering, outdoor photography, sailing, sky diving, snowboarding, technical tree climbing, telemark skiing, trail work, wilderness survival and zip lining.

Competencies Desired Prior to and After Hire

The leadership skills deemed most important prior to hire were different from the ones identified as most important to include in the training after hire (see Figure 1). Prior to hire, the highest rated soft skills were trustworthiness, (M=4.66 on a scale of 5), ethical behavior, with a mean of 4.56 and decision-making skills (M=4.55). The lowest rated soft skills were philosophical foundations, (M=3.21), group processing skills (M=3.73), and judgment based on experience, (M=3.87).

When training staff (after hire), the most important soft skills to teach were decision-making, (*M*=4.80), group management (*M*=4.77) and communication skills (*M*=4.67). The lowest rated soft skills were physical fitness (*M*=3.93), healthy self-concept and ego (*M*=4.01) and philosophical foundations (*M*=4.01).

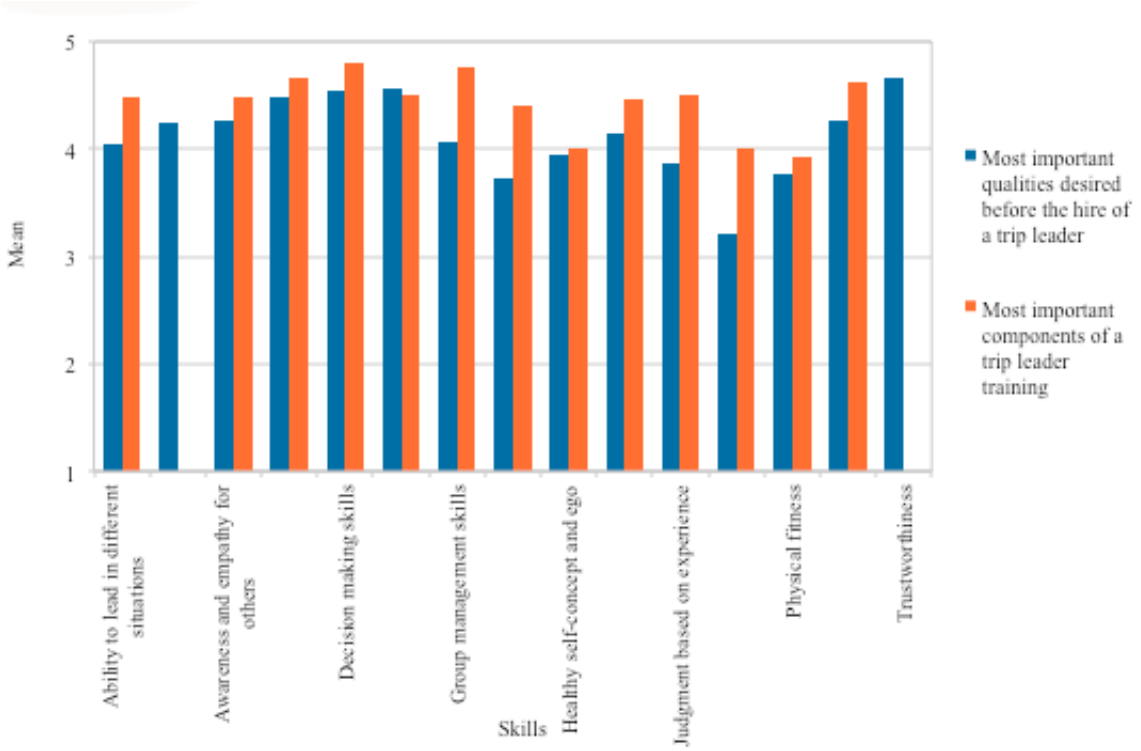

Figure 1. Desired Soft Skills Prior to and After Hire

Hard skills had a similar result, with the highest rated skills changing from before the hire to after the hire (see Figure 2). The highest rates hard skills prior to hire were the trip specific skills (*M*=3.99), teaching skills (*M*=3.97), and first aid/injury management (*M*=3.96). The lowest rated hard skills were foreign language skills (*M*=2.56), rescue skills (*M*=3.33), and weather reading (*M*= 3.34).

After hire, the highest rated hard skills were first aid/injury management (*M*=4.71), teaching skills (*M*=4.65), and trip planning skills (*M*=4.61). The lowest rated

hard skills remained the same as prior to hire and were foreign language skills (*M*=2.59), weather reading (*M*=4.00) and rescue skills (*M*=4.20), though it should be noted that all hard skills other than foreign language skills were rated 4.00 or higher.

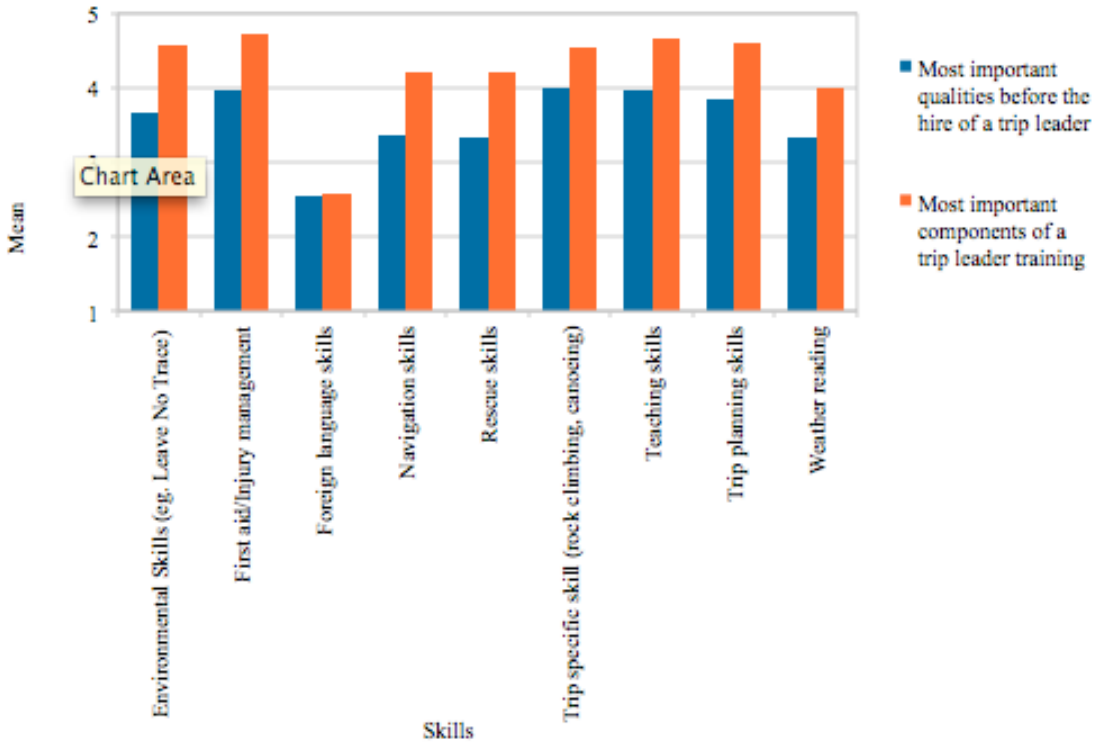

Figure 2. Desired Hard Skills Prior to and After Hire

Whether before or after hire, hard skills were generally ranked lower in importance than the soft skills. The only skill that was ranked lower in training than prior to hire, whether a hard skill or a soft skill, was ethical behavior. Having said that, some skills were not rated in training because they are not something that one can easily train for (trustworthiness, ability to work under pressure).

In this research, paired t-tests were done for each of the soft skills and hard skills to find if there was a statistical significance in the difference between what the key

informants look for before hire and what they train for after hire (see Table 1). To establish statistical significance, the p-value < .001 was used.

Table 1. Paired T-test Results for Skills

Skill Pair	Sig (2-tailed)
Ability to lead in different situations*	.000
Awareness and empathy for others	.031
Communication skills	.052
Decision making skills	.006
Ethical behavior	.665
Group management skills*	.000
Group processing skills*	.000
Healthy self-concept and ego	.443
Inclusiveness	.001
Judgment based on experience*	.000
Philosophical foundations*	.000
Physical fitness	.103
Problem solving skills*	.000
Environmental skills (e.g. Leave No Trace)*	.000
First aid/Injury management*	.000
Foreign language skills	.784
Navigation skills*	.000
Rescue skills*	.000
Trip specific skills (e.g. rock climbing, canoeing)*	.000
Teaching skills*	.000
Trip planning skills*	.000
Weather reading*	.000

*Reached the .001 level of significance

Seven out of thirteen of the soft skills had no statistically significant differences when looked at prior to and after hire, but all but one of the hard skills did. With the soft skills, the ability to lead in different situations, group management skills, group processing skills, judgment based on experience, philosophical foundations and problem

solving skills all had statistically significant differences when looking at responses prior to and after hire. In the hard skills, all but foreign language skills were statistically significant when looked at prior to and after hire.

Certifications

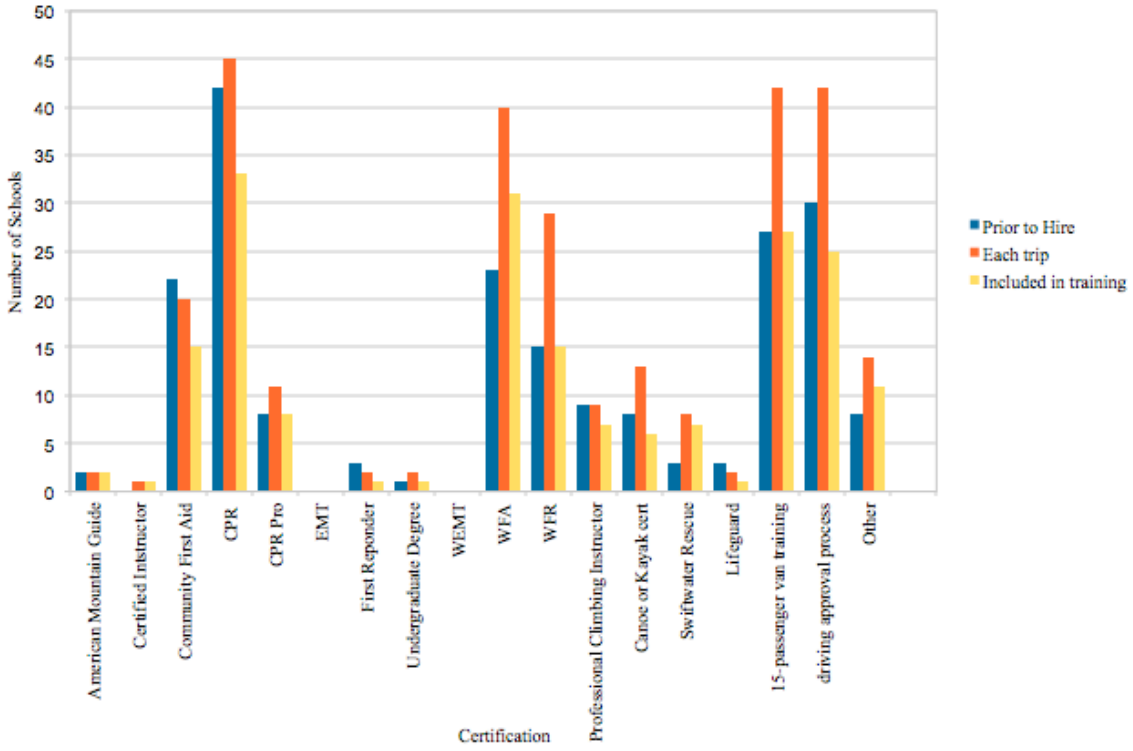

Figure 3. Certifications required prior to hire, for each trip, and in training

The requirement of certifications was looked at in three different ways (see Figure 3). The first was the certifications required of individuals before they are hired. The most important certification for someone aspiring to get hired as a trip leader to have is CPR, as 42/77 schools required this. The driver approval process and 15-passenger van training ranked next, with 30 and 27 respondents requiring it, respectively. Wilderness First Aid was ranked third, with 23/77 school requiring this.

The second way to look at certifications was what each individual trip required at least one leader to have. This was important to clarify because a trip may need one wilderness first responder on it, but not all of the trip leaders on the trip must be wilderness first responders. Forty five out of 77 (45/77) of the schools required that at least one person be certified in CPR. Forty two out of 77 (42/77) schools required that at least one person on a trip had 15-passenger van training and had gone through a driver approval process. Forty out of 77 (40/77) required that at least one person had Wilderness First Aid.

The third view of certifications was what the program trained the individuals in after they had been hired. Thirty three out of 77 (33/77) trained their trip leaders in CPR once hired, while 31/77 trained them in Wilderness First Aid. Twenty seven out of 77 (27/77) schools have their workers complete 15-passenger van training.

None of the programs surveyed required Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) or Wilderness EMT. These are very time-consuming certifications to get and require a significant amount of medical knowledge. Because many of the people hired to lead trips on university and college campuses are students, this may be beyond their financial ability and time commitment.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to find out what outdoor pursuits programs look for when hiring outdoor trip leaders for universities, and what they train for after hire. After looking at the results, it appears that soft skills are the most important qualities looked for and trained for in outdoor trip leaders. These are important, in that the manager as well as the trip participants need to be able to trust the person that is leading them in the wilderness.

Hard skills are not as important, in hire and in training, and this is interesting, because one would want a trip leader that not only can work with people, but can do certain hard skills while in the field with no supervision.

This study supports a claim that there are no standards across the board in what universities and colleges look for in hiring and training their staff. This is noteworthy and possibly a serious concern. While hard and fast standards would be difficult and probably not desirable, some bare minimums would make good. Universities and colleges should be at the forefront of high quality outdoor education programs, with some of their leaders going to non-university settings to leader outdoor trips. If universities are the training ground for new leaders who may not have all desired skills, this training ground needs to properly train potential leaders and instill in them that certain levels of competency are vital. The following are some different ideas when it comes to certain competencies.

Philosophical Foundations

Philosophical foundations ranked low when compared to the other competencies. A reasonable question to ask is whether this low priority means that the philosophical implications of outdoor trips (e.g., humanity's connection to the natural world, the importance of nature in an individual's life) also is not seen as particularly important. When outdoor programs provide outdoor trips, is it good enough to simply measure a trip's success by whether people had fun and no one got hurt? Again, if university outdoor trips are a training ground for young leaders and for young participants in wilderness recreation, these programs have a responsibility to provide opportunities that go beyond mere entertainment.

With the amount of time and money spent on outdoor trips, and the low number of students they reach, we must be able to give a solid reason why these trips are so important. Intramural sports reach many more students for much less money, and they are fun and safe as well, without the element of uncertainty that is inherent to outdoor travel.

Speaking on a personal note, I had to take "Philosophical Foundations of Recreation" while a graduate student at the University of Wisconsin La Crosse. It was one of my favorite classes, but the feedback I heard from other students was that they didn't like it and didn't understand it. Most of these students graduated without an appreciation for the philosophical foundations of their industry. When we are sending young professionals into the field who don't find these foundations important, they are not going to find it important to hire students with these philosophical foundations, nor will their programs have a philosophy that extends beyond fun and safety.

Environmental ethics are another competency that should be addressed within programs and be paired with the philosophy behind a program. There are fewer and fewer places to go into the 'wilderness' and do outdoor activities, and each group, particularly large groups, have an impact on those places. University and college outdoor pursuits programs should focus on teaching and practicing good environmental ethics, particularly if they want to continue to use the lands that they are using. When large groups degrade an area, the governing unit is more likely to cut the number of users and have more restrictions. Universities and colleges can be part of the solution, following the rules set forth in relation to the number of people allowed and what needs to be carried out (including human waste, if required), and setting an example for their participants and others they encounter in the wilderness. There are many resources programs can use to make sure that they are going above and beyond the standards set forth by landowners.

Since only two schools surveyed were WEA accredited, this study shows that there is not a single set of current standards that most university and college outdoor programs are following. Each school has their own training program and requirements, even though there are opportunities to become accredited and follow standards. Overall, the bar is set low for university outdoor trip program hiring and training and should be improved. AORE or another organization could create recommended minimum standards specifically for universities and colleges. Competent managers of campus recreation programs are looking for reasonable standards to at least serve as guidelines, but short of full accreditation, nothing concrete exists.

Future Research

There is more research that can be done in outdoor trip programs at universities and colleges. One example would be a qualitative study on *how* different programs train their trip leaders. Since there are no overall standards, each university is left up to its own means to train their trip leaders, whether it is through mentorship over the long term, or hiring people that have led trips previously, with little instruction. There are schools on both ends of the spectrum, as well as programs that are just starting, and this would be valuable information to create standards as well as help universities that want to improve their trip leader training.

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APPENDIX A

CONSENT FORM

Project Title: Desirable Competencies When Hiring Outdoor Pursuits Trip Leaders on University Campuses

I am conducting research to ascertain what the most important competencies of outdoor trip leaders on a university campus are, as well as what the most important components of a trip leader training are. In keeping with the ethical standards for doing research with human subjects, this consent form describes the project and asks for your permission to allow us to use information you give me in the following survey for research purposes. Please read and sign the form. Feel free to ask questions about any aspect of the project.

I ask that the key informant be the person involved in running an outdoor pursuits experience on a university campus, and is involved in hiring the trip leaders within that program. If you do not meet these requirements, please pass this survey on to the appropriate person.

Purpose and Procedure
My participation involves taking part in a twenty minute survey on Qualtrics.

Confidentiality
The results of this study may be published in scientific literature or presented at professional meetings.
My information/data will not be linked with personally identifiable information. Names and schools will not be attached to results.
My information will be confidential. Only the research team members will have access to the information collected in the survey.

Possible benefits
I will benefit from the research project by choosing to receive the results of the study electronically.

Questions regarding study procedures may be directed to Anna DeMers (262-352-3299 or demers.anna@uwlax.edu), the principal investigator or her thesis advisor, Steve Simpson (608-785-8216 or ssimpson@uwlax.edu.) Questions regarding the protection of human subjects may be addressed to the UW-La Crosse Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects, (608-785-8124 or irb@uwlax.edu).I understand the project and grant permission to use my answers to this survey.

I give my consent to participate in this research.
Yes
No

APPENDIX B

RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

1. The following questions are about the school you work at and its program. (See consent form)

2. What is the title of your current position? _____

3. How long have you worked with the outdoor trips program at your university?
   a. Less than 1 year
   b. 1-2 years
   c. 3-5 years
   d. 6-10 years
   e. 11-15 years
   f. 16-20 years
   g. 21+ years

4. What region is your school in?
   a. East North Central - IL, IN, MI, OH, WI
   b. East South Central - AL, KY, MS, TN
   c. Mid-Atlantic - NJ, NY, PA
   d. Mountain West - AZ, CO, ID, MT, NM, NV, UT, WY
   e. New England - CT, MA, ME, NH, RI, VT
   f. Outside of the United States
   g. Pacific West - AK, CA, , HI, OR, WA
   h. South Atlantic - DC, DE, FL, GA, MD, NC, SC, VA, WV
   i. West North Central - IA, KS, MN, MO, NE, ND, SD
   j. West South Central - AR, LA, OK, TX

5. What department is your program in?
   a. Academic Department
   b. Recreational Sports Department
   c. Student Association or Club
   d. Student Services or Housing Department
   e. Other (Please specify)_____

6. How long has the program at your school existed?
   a. 1-5 years
   b. 6-10 years
   c. 11-15 years
   d. 16-20 years
   e. 21-25 years
   f. 26-30 years
   g. 31-35 years
   h. 36+ years
   i. Do not know

7. Is your program accredited by Wilderness Education Association (WEA), Association for Experiential Education (AEE) or a similar organization?

a. WEA
b. AEE
c. Other (please specify)_____
d. None

8. On average, how many overnight trips does your program lead in a school year?

a. 1-5
b. 6-10
c. 11-15
d. 16-20
e. 21-25
f. 26-30
g. 31-35
h. 36+

9. On average, how many one day trips does your program lead in a school year?

a. 1-5
b. 6-10
c. 11-15
d. 16-20
e. 21-25
f. 26-30
g. 31-35
h. 36+

10. How many people participate in your trips each year?

a. 1-50
b. 51-100
c. 101-250
d. 251-500
e. 501-750
f. 751-1000
g. 1001-1500
h. 1501-2000
i. 2001-2500
j. 2500+

11. Which activities are offered at least once a year in your outdoor pursuits trips?

a. Freshman Orientation Trips
b. International Trips

Land-Based Activities

c. Backpacking
d. Canyoneering
e. Car Camping
f. Hiking
g. Horseback Riding
h. Ice Climbing
i. Mountain Biking
j. Mountaineering
k. Rock Climbing
l. Tour Biking

Water Activities

m. Fishing
n. Flatwater Canoeing
o. Fly Fishing
p. Paddle Boarding
q. Scuba Diving
r. Sea Kayaking
s. Snorkeling
t. Surfing
u. Whitewater Canoeing
v. Whitewater Kayaking
w. Whitewater Rafting

Winter Activities

x. Backcountry Skiing
y. Cross Country Skiing
z. Dog Sledding
aa. Downhill Skiing
ab. Snowshoeing
ac. Winter Camping
ad. Other (Please specify)_____

12. How many outdoor trip leading staff are in your program?

a. 1-2
b. 3-5
c. 6-10
d. 11-15
e. 16-20
f. 21-25
g. 26-30
h. 31-35
i. 36+

13. What is the minimum age you require for outdoor pursuits trip leaders?

a. No minimum
b. 18
c. 21
d. Other _____

14. Your trip leaders are _____.

a. Paid
b. Volunteer
c. Both

15. What is the average length of time a trip leader works for your program?

a. Less than 1 year
b. 1 year
c. 2 years
d. 3 years
e. 4 or more years

16. How many trips are the trip leaders expected to lead in a school year?

a. 1-2
b. 3-5
c. 6-10
d. 11+

17. How many **trip specific hours** of training do trip leaders receive prior to leading a trip (**excluding certifications that you require**)?

a. 0-20 hours
b. 21-40 hours
c. 41-60 hours
d. 61-80 hours
e. 81-100 hours
f. 101-120 hours
g. 121+ hours

In this section, you will be asked 3 questions concerning certifications. In the first question, you will answer which certifications are required before you hire the potential trip leader. The second question concerns specific trips. Please answer what is required for each trip to go out (e.g. if it's a water based trip, does at least one person need to hold lifeguarding or a canoe instructor certification?) The last question asks what staff are required to be trained in once they are hired.

18. What are the minimum certifications you **require before the hire of your trip leaders?**

General Certifications

a. American Mountain Guides Association: Guide or equivalent Certified Instructor (e.g. Wilderness Education Association or National Outdoor Leadership School)
b. Community First Aid
c. CPR
d. CPR for the Professional Rescuer
e. Emergency Medical Technician (EMT)
f. First Responder
g. Undergraduate Degree
h. Wilderness Emergency Medical Technician (WEMT)
i. Wilderness First Aid (WFA)
j. Wilderness First Responder (WFR)

Required on climbing trips

k. Professional Climbing Instructor's Association: Climbing Instructor or equivalent

Required on water-based trips

l. American Canoeing Association: Canoe or Kayak Instructor or equivalent
m. American Canoeing Association: Swiftwater Rescue or equivalent Lifeguard

Driving on trips

n. 15 Passenger Van Training - what is the minimum age?___
o. Driver Approval Process - what is the minimum age?___

Other

p. Other (Please specify)_____

19. What are the minimum **required certifications for each trip that you have**, meaning that at least one leader on the trip must hold them? (For activity specific trips, are activity specific certifications required?)

General Certifications

a. American Mountain Guides Association: Guide or equivalent Certified Instructor (e.g. Wilderness Education Association or National Outdoor Leadership School)
b. Community First Aid
c. CPR
d. CPR for the Professional Rescuer
e. Emergency Medical Technician (EMT)
f. First Responder
g. Undergraduate Degree
h. Wilderness Emergency Medical Technician (WEMT)
i. Wilderness First Aid (WFA)
j. Wilderness First Responder (WFR)

Required on climbing trips

k. Professional Climbing Instructor's Association: Climbing Instructor or equivalent

Required on water-based trips

l. American Canoeing Association: Canoe or Kayak Instructor or equivalent

m. American Canoeing Association: Swiftwater Rescue or equivalent Lifeguard

Driving on trips

n. 15 Passenger Van Training - what is the minimum age?___

o. Driver Approval Process - what is the minimum age?___

Other

p. Other (Please specify)_____

20. What certifications do you **require your staff to earn during their training**?

General Certifications

a. American Mountain Guides Association: Guide or equivalent Certified Instructor (e.g. Wilderness Education Association or National Outdoor Leadership School)

b. Community First Aid

c. CPR

d. CPR for the Professional Rescuer

e. Emergency Medical Technician (EMT)

f. First Responder

g. Undergraduate Degree

h. Wilderness Emergency Medical Technician (WEMT)

i. Wilderness First Aid (WFA)

j. Wilderness First Responder (WFR)

Required on climbing trips

k. Professional Climbing Instructor's Association: Climbing Instructor or equivalent

Required on water-based trips

l. American Canoeing Association: Canoe or Kayak Instructor or equivalent

m. American Canoeing Association: Swiftwater Rescue or equivalent Lifeguard

Driving on trips

n. 15 Passenger Van Training - what is the minimum age?___

o. Driver Approval Process - what is the minimum age?___

Other

p. Other (Please specify)_____

The following list is about what the **most important qualifications of a trip leader are prior to employment**. Please rate them on a scale of one to five, with one being least important and five being most important.

21. Soft Skills

Ability to lead in different situations	1	2	3	4	5
Ability to work under pressure	1	2	3	4	5
Awareness and empathy for others	1	2	3	4	5
Communication skills	1	2	3	4	5
Decision making skills	1	2	3	4	5
Ethical behavior	1	2	3	4	5
Group management skills	1	2	3	4	5
Group processing skills	1	2	3	4	5
Healthy self-concept and ego	1	2	3	4	5
Inclusiveness	1	2	3	4	5
Judgment based on experience	1	2	3	4	5
Philosophical foundations	1	2	3	4	5
Physical fitness	1	2	3	4	5
Problem solving skills	1	2	3	4	5
Trustworthiness	1	2	3	4	5

22. Hard skills

Environmental skills (ex: Leave No Trace)	1	2	3	4	5
First aid/injury management	1	2	3	4	5
Foreign language skills	1	2	3	4	5
Navigation skills	1	2	3	4	5
Rescue skills	1	2	3	4	5
Specific skill (rock climbing, canoeing, kayaking, backpacking, etc.)					
	1	2	3	4	5
Teaching skills	1	2	3	4	5
Trip planning skills	1	2	3	4	5
Weather reading	1	2	3	4	5

The following list is about what you believe the **most important components of a trip leader training are**. Please rate them on a scale of one to five, with one being least important and five being most important.

23. Soft Skills

Ability to lead in different situations	1	2	3	4	5
Awareness and empathy for others	1	2	3	4	5
Communication skills	1	2	3	4	5
Decision making skills	1	2	3	4	5
Ethical behavior	1	2	3	4	5
Group management skills	1	2	3	4	5
Group processing skills	1	2	3	4	5

Healthy self-concept and ego	1	2	3	4	5
Inclusiveness	1	2	3	4	5
Judgment based on experience	1	2	3	4	5
Philosophical foundations	1	2	3	4	5
Physical fitness	1	2	3	4	5
Problem solving skills	1	2	3	4	5

24. Hard skills

Environmental skills (ex: Leave No Trace)	1	2	3	4	5
First aid/injury management	1	2	3	4	5
Foreign language skills	1	2	3	4	5
Navigation skills	1	2	3	4	5
Rescue skills	1	2	3	4	5
Specific skill (rock climbing, canoeing, kayaking, backpacking, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5
Teaching skills	1	2	3	4	5
Trip planning skills	1	2	3	4	5
Weather reading	1	2	3	4	5

25. To what extent do you agree with this statement: "I am satisfied with the performance of the trip leaders in my school's outdoor pursuits program."

a. Strongly Agree
b. Agree
c. Neither Agree nor Disagree
d. Disagree
e. Strongly Disagree

26. What is the name of your university? (Optional)_____

27. If you would like a copy of the results, please provide your email. (Optional)_____

28. Any additional comments

_____

APPENDIX C

IRB APPLICATION

1. A brief description of the purpose of the proposed research project, including approximate beginning and ending dates of data collection. Include a brief and specific description of procedures and/or activities which subjects will undergo.

This study will survey staff at universities that are organizational members of the Association of Outdoor Recreation and Education (AORE) to ascertain what the most important components of their trip leader training are and the most important competencies of outdoor trip leaders. The staff person who is in charge of the programs (the key informant) will be surveyed electronically via Qualtrics. I hope to survey the key informants during the month of March, 2012.

2. A description of the characteristics of the subject population in the project (e.g., number, gender, race or ethnicity [if known], age range, sampling frame, general mental and physical health, and any other unique characteristics) and an explanation of the rationale for using this particular population.

The population being surveyed will be university employees in the position of hiring students at university recreational facilities. These people will likely have masters degrees and are the individuals hiring and training outdoor recreation student leaders.

3. If relevant, a description of why any vulnerable populations are necessary to the research project (e.g., prisoners, children, persons with disabilities, pregnant women, or any group whose ability to give a voluntary informed consent may be in question.

Not applicable

4. A description of how and where voluntary informed consent will be obtained from subject(s). You should include a copy of final informed consent form, recruitment

materials/posters, and final survey instrument or a list of interview questions along with this narrative statement.

The informed consent will be given at the beginning of the survey. They will click a box that will be their electronic signature, and the completion of the research instrument also shows informed consent. (see attachment)

5. A description of procedures to ensure the confidentiality of the subjects.

The results will be in a password protected Qualtrics account. Each informant will be assigned a number for writing the results and will not be identified by name or school affiliation.

6. A description of any risks and/or inconveniences that might occur to the subjects as a result of participating in the research, including a statement of the approximate amount of time required of the subjects.

No risks. The survey will take about twenty minutes.

7. A description of the procedures that will be used to minimize potential risk(s) to subjects and the probable effectiveness of those procedures.

Not applicable

8. A description of any anticipated benefits that might occur for the subjects and any anticipated beneficial knowledge that might occur as a result of the proposed research project.

All respondents will receive the results of the study. The participants will benefit from this research by being able to see what other members of AORE look for in their trip leaders.

APPENDIX D

IRB APPROVAL LETTER

UNIVERSITY of WISCONSIN
LA CROSSE

To: Anna DeMers

From: Bart Van Voorhis, Coordinator
Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the
Protection of Human Subjects
bvanvoorhis@uwlax.edu
5-6892

Date: March 19, 2012

Re: **RESEARCH PROTOCOL SUBMITTED TO IRB**

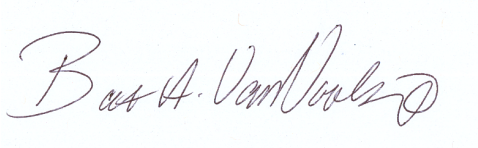
The IRB Committee has reviewed your proposed research project entitled: ***"Desirable Competencies when Hiring Outdoor Pursuits Trip Leaders on University Campuses."***

The Committee has determined that your research protocol will not place human subjects at risk. **The attached protocol has been approved and is exempt from further review per 45CFR46, 46.101(b)(2).**

However, it is strongly suggested that Informed Consent always be used. Remember to provide participants a copy of the consent form and to keep a copy for your records. Consent documentation and IRB records should be retained for at least 3 years after completion of the project.

Since you are not seeking federal funding for this research, the review process is complete and you may proceed with your project.

Good luck with your project.



cc: IRB File
Steve Simpson, Faculty Advisor

Graduate Studies and Research & Sponsored Program
220 Morris Hall, University of Wisconsin-La Crosse
1725 State Street, La Crosse, WI 54601
Phone (608)785-8124 and (608) 785-8007
An affirmative action/equal opportunity employer

APPENDIX E

INTERESTING COMMENTS

General Comments

Some definite biases in some of the questions will lead to inaccurate (in our case) results. Just the notion of 'hiring' staff doesn't fit many outdoor programme models. Similarly, the minimum skills outside of certifications could also be confusing if the programme itself is built as a certification. On a much smaller level, we haven't used 15 passenger vans in about 8 years and I don't know anyone who still does around here. Also, the terms 'hard' and 'soft' skills have generally been replaced with something else, often 'technical' and 'relationship.' There's nothing soft about confrontation skills, for instance.

Again, we have no trip leaders; I am it. We run a very small program.

Generic outdoor skills (rather than trip-specific skills) such as self-care for the backcountry setting, shelters, camp kitchens & water purification are important and highly preferred prior to trip leader training. These get review in brief as student teaching topics with emphasis on educational skills rather than focused primary instruction and observed practice of all trainees. Trip-specific and rescue skills certifications are important for eligibility to lead technical trips, but not for basic trip leaders. Wilderness medicine is likewise beyond the scope of our trip leader training and is a separate prerequisite for trip leaders.

I found this survey confusing and poorly designed. Under the certifications section, AMGA is listed as a general cert and was not included under rock climbing. A lot of the questions under the important qualifications are situational depending on activity. The

likert scale for this section I believe would be better suited with different labels, the agree/disagree scale is confusing in this use.

thanks

Every student at our college starts with a 21-day backpacking expedition. That time in the field provides a great base for student to then lead easy backpacking trips and progress from there. The number of hours they get for training is probably closer to 10-15 before they lead, not including the 21-day backpacking course.

1. I hope you are aware of the research in this area, much done in the 1980s, perhaps particularly the Swiderski study. It would be worth comparing the results to that research.
2. I found the question about "most important after hiring" questions not to be very good. When I ran my big outdoor program (as a faculty member, I don't do that any more), I had staff in different stages of their personal development. So, what is most important depends on where they were at.
3. State law, apparently, precludes having a good outdoor program at a public university. Transportation must be accompanied by professional faculty/ staff. Students may not drive unaccompanied -- makes it very difficult to have a program. The [school omitted] program is apparently an organization legally distinct from the university-- it appear to be one of the few state university outdoor programs. However, I would like to be informed if you discover any others, private or public

4. Do you have a list of outdoor programs? How complete is it?

5. In the northeast, many/most "outdoor programs" are club-based. Were you aware of that?

Good luck

With the number of participants question I was unable to find specific numbers so I did my best to guesstimate.

Some of these questions don't fit with our program so it is completely as best possible. We offer a full enrollment first year trip for all 420 incoming first-years with 80 upper class leaders, plus throughout the year we offer "training" trips as well as a student-run club who run trips every weekend. So as you can see, we have a variety of types of programs under the umbrella of the outdoor education center. Hope it still helps!

Only comment is related to certifications. As I stated earlier, we train our staff ourselves with the exception of hiring WMI of NOLS to come in and teach the WFA Course. We need to know that a staff member understands our procedures and protocols and having a card in their wallet does not provide that. Nor does it ensure that they possess the skills they need to lead our trips. What is does tell us is the have taken a course and passed it.

This is a hard one as we are a one-faculty program with 2 adjunct. we have a class for outdoor students to enroll in where they assist with other classes, but also do not have much a trip program other than that of classes.

Within our program a professional or graduate student within the program is required to attend and overnight programming. These positions hold most of the certifications presented above. Student trip leaders are encouraged to obtain some and required only WFA/WFR. Most training occurs in house beyond that.

Our school also offers a major in Outdoor Recreation Leadership. Many of our trip leaders take courses in the major that provide specific skills and certifications that are applied on our trips. We try not to duplicate efforts and tend to select trip leaders from students in the academic major and supplement the training on an as-need basis.

I would recommend re wording some questions. Some of your questions force me to answer in a way that is not reflective of how I actually run my program. Guides must have a WFA to begin working as a guide as an assistant, however to lead overnight trips all guides must be WFR (plus activity specific experience or certification)

look forward to seeing results.

THANKS!

We are an entirely student volunteer group. Students hold officer positions, plan a variety of trips (one each school weekend with a rotation of who leads longer break trips). While no official certifications are required, we encourage officers to become certified in CPR, WFR and any trip-specific skill areas to which they are inclined.

We are a young program. Only in our second year of existence so we are trying to implement a lot of these training's and cultures into our program and students still.

Thanks for doing this.

We are a first year program so we are working hard to establish protocol, procedure, requirements, etc

Certification Comments

Prior to hire

Some trips have special requirements

6 in-house class sessions and 10-day training trip

We train our own staff

All guides must show demonstrated competencies in each specific activity prior to leading

In-house trip lead training

Certifications are acquired in training. No certifications required before hire.

Trailer driver training

Minimum age = 19, 12 passenger vans, no 15 ones

American Red Cross WRFA

Not required to pass anything before hire

Commercial driving license

LNT trainer

Each trip

One WFR required on a longer trip

OAP trip leader training

Climbing trips: AMGA Single Pitch Instructor or equivalent

American Red Cross WRFA

LNT trainer

We train our own staff

Trailer pulling

Pass in house driver training and Motor Vehicle History Check

Commercial Driving License

All guides on overnight trips must be WFR, all guides on day trips must be WFA

In-house TLT

12 passenger van – 21 age minimum

completion of in-house activity specific site management training

trailer driver training

LNT

LNT trainer

Trained in after hire

American Red Cross WRFA

We work with Transportation Services on campus to train staff for driving

LNT Trainer

Trailer pulling

12 passenger van – 21 year min

LNT

Successful completion of in-house training

In-house driver training

n/a – we only use our faculty to lead trips

LNT

Leave No trace trainer